

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, from day one, the Bush administration has pursued an aggressive agenda of privatizing essential Government services, even when there has existed overwhelming evidence that doing so would waste money, impair accountability, harm citizens who rely on those services, or jeopardize our Nation's safety and security. The Kennedy-McCaskill amendment on civilian contracting will slow this agenda and bring some much needed common sense to the administration's campaign to outsource essential functions to the private sector.

Among other reforms, the amendment will nullify an edict imposed from outside the Department of Defense that the agency contract out a certain number of jobs regardless of the merits; give Federal employees the same rights to challenge a contracting decision that are now enjoyed by private contractors; and eliminate a wasteful rule that civilian jobs automatically be recompeted at the end of each performance period. I am a strong supporter of the Kennedy-McCaskill amendment, which will serve as an important check on the administration's privatization agenda.

UNSOLVED CIVIL RIGHTS CRIMES

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I objected to a unanimous consent request to pass S. 535/H.R. 923, the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act. I objected, not because I disagree with the

well intended motives of the legislation, but because the authors of the bill refused to work with me to make some commonsense changes.

Let me be clear, I absolutely support the goals of this legislation and believe that those who committed civil rights crimes must be brought to justice, but I believe that we can and must do so in a fiscally responsible manner.

Just last week, the Senate voted to increase the Federal Government's debt limit to \$9.815 trillion. It is beyond irresponsible to pass any bill that will add to this debt that will be inherited by our children and grandchildren. Even our best intentions need to be paid for with offsets from lower priorities or wasteful spending.

On February 5, 2007, I sent a letter to my colleagues outlining my intent to object to any legislation authorizing new spending that is not offset by reductions in real spending elsewhere. I strongly believe that Congress should stop borrowing and spending beyond our means. Instead, Congress, like all families, ought to prioritize spending and reduce less important spending when greater priorities arise.

S. 535/H.R. 923 violates two of the principles that I outlined in my February letter. These are: If a bill authorizes new spending, it must be offset by reductions in real spending elsewhere; and if a bill creates or authorizes a new Federal program or activity, it must not duplicate an existing program or activity.

This bill authorizes unpaid for new spending and creates a new government program that duplicates existing government efforts. Both of these concerns could be easily addressed if the sponsors of the bill were interested in securing its passage.

In June of this year, my office contacted the bill's sponsors to suggest possible offsets so that I could give my consent—but there was no desire, at the time, to amend the bill. This was unfortunate because last Congress, when Senator Jim Talent was the lead sponsor, he agreed to include offsets in exchange for my consent, but the com-

promise language was opposed by an unidentified Senator.

It is also unfortunate because there is no shortage of potential offsets for this bill within the Department of Justice, which would administer the proposed program. The bill authorizes \$12 million each year for 10 years. The Department has \$1.6 billion in unobligated balances, which are funds that have been appropriated but which there are no plans to spend. In fiscal year 2006, the Department spent \$45.9 million on conferences, a 34-percent increase since fiscal year 2000. The inspector general examined just 10 conferences and found that the Department spent an estimated \$1.5 million on food and beverages. This included paying \$4 per meatball at one lavish dinner and spreading an average of \$25 worth of snacks around to each participant at a movie-themed party. It is estimated that the current fiscal year 2008 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill contains congressional earmarks totaling \$587 million and the bill exceeds the President's request by more than \$2 billion. Clearly, there is wasteful spending that can be reduced to pay for this program.

Just like American taxpayers, Congress needs to learn to pay for what it spends. This is a reasonable expectation but one that has been ignored by Washington politicians who tend to put off difficult decisions and, as a result, have charged up a \$9 trillion debt.

This bill also creates a new Federal program that duplicates an existing Federal Government initiative that seeks to address unsolved civil rights crimes. The Department of Justice and the Civil Rights Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation are currently working with States and nonprofit groups to pursue unsolved civil rights era crimes that resulted in death.

In February 2006, the FBI began an initiative to identify hate crimes that occurred prior to December 1969, and resulted in death. Since then, the Bureau's 56 field offices began to reexamine their unsolved civil rights cases